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UNCLAS AMMAN 008123

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SUBJECT: COURT CONVICTS, SENTENCES, AND ORDERS THE RELEASE
OF "REFORM AND CHALLENGE" DEFENDANTS

REF: AMMAN 07813

1. (U) The State Security Court on December 10 convicted five men of sabotage and possession of explosive material for a plot dating back five years. The court sentenced a sixth man involved in the group, known as "Reform and Challenge," to four years for complicity in plotting subversive acts. Judge Fawaz Bqour ordered their immediate release "since they had already spent the sentenced time in prison." The prosecutor can appeal the verdict within 30 days.

2. (U) The group is believed responsible for carrying out a series of unsophisticated bombings in 1998 that damaged cars but caused no casualties. The State Security Court had acquitted the group, but the Cassation Court overturned the verdict, asking the lower court to re-evaluate its proceedings. The prosecution charge sheet claimed that the defendants since 1994 had targeted intelligence departments, police departments, and an Amman hotel, according to press reports. The group reportedly aimed to "change the status quo in Jordan" by preaching the use of force.
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